

FOR MEETING: DMOC: Blockades and Protests: GAC update (Feb. 18)

From: "Wynne-Hughes, Antonia -USS -DMA" </o=dfait-maeci/ou=exchange administrative group (fydibohf23spdlt)/cn=recipients/cn=cb1bec091bb347b0985cf649a3e2130f-wynneha">
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Date: Fri, 18 Feb 2022 18:44:50 +0000
Attachments: Trucker Protest Rollup 2 (Feb 17).docx (28.25 kB); Truckers protest roll-up Feb 18.docx (42.8 kB); IB_WSHDC-#767958-v1-2022-02-17 SENATORS react to trucker protest.DOCX (12.79 kB); rosendale_letter_-_trucker_border_vax_mandate_final.pdf (2.59 MB); Trucker Protest Rollup 1 (Feb 18).docx (41.22 kB); IB_WSHDC-#767961-v1-2022-02-18 CONGRESSIONAL reaction to protests.DOCX (184.28 kB)

DMA: black/for DMOC

Deputy,

Please see below NGM-approved input for DMOC at 3 pm.

These DMOC meetings will continue over the weekend; Laurie is on call for our team and will share with you directly. I understand the timing of these sometimes shifts around on the weekend; our office will keep an eye out for that and let you know.

Leads communicated with PCO re: Dallas yesterday, as per your message. We also conveyed your feedback on material for Thursday's broader DMOC to leads, who will be working to ensure material is more relevant to other DMs.

Antonia

DMA DMOC Talking Points:

- Continue to track reactions and developments in the U.S. and internationally.
- A group of 64 House Republicans, led by Montana Representative Matt Rosendale, sent a letter to President Biden in support of the Canadian truckers, and urging him to "work with Canada to lift the mandates on essential travel at the border".
- There is a lead article in this week's Economist on the blockades and the government's response:
 - The Economist: "No, Canada: Justin Trudeau's crackdown on protests could make things worse. By seeking to curb free speech, he will aggravate Canada's divisions."

1. Canada-US Engagement:

- TC Minister Alghabra had separate virtual meetings with the Governor of Montana Greg Gianforte and North Dakota Governor Doug Bergum today (both signatories to the PM-POTUS letter):

Montana Governor requested that Canada release a timeline for lifting all pandemic-related mandates as soon as possible, noting that Montana is doing fine without mandates for over a year. He also noted that he sees little evidence of the efficiency of mandates to control the pandemic, which instead created an “economic pandemic”.



Governor Greg Gianforte @GovGianforte · 14h

Today I spoke with Canadian Transport Minister Omar Alghabra, at his request. Montana appreciates our partnership with Canada and her provinces. Our supply chains must flow fully for our consumers, and to do that the Canadian government should eliminate its trucker mandates.

**READOUT OF GOV. GIANFORTE'S CALL WITH
CANADIAN TRANSPORT MINISTER OMAR ALGHABRA**

Governor Greg Gianforte today spoke with Canadian Transport Minister Omar Alghabra about the vaccine and quarantine mandates the Canadian government reimposed on cross border truckers. The governor cautioned the minister about the negative impacts the prime minister's COVID-related mandates are having on transportation, trade, and travel. Governor Gianforte pressed Minister Alghabra on the Trudeau government's plans and timeline to eliminate the mandates against truckers, which are estimated to force thousands of drivers out of the trucking industry if not reversed. Governor Gianforte praised provincial governments for easing and eliminating their COVID-related mandates, and expressed hope the prime minister will take similar action. Citing Montana providing vaccinations to Canadian truckers free of charge last year as an example, the governor emphasized the importance of leaders of Montana and Canada to keep an open dialogue to address bilateral issues.

North Dakota Governor discussed the blockades at the border, thanking Canada for peacefully removing the blockades and re-opening the border. He noted that North Dakota had provided help in vaccinating truckers early in the pandemic, and that he appreciates the excellent relationships he has with Premiers Moe and Stefanson.

2. **'The Economist' weighs in (2 articles):** The leading publication's Feb.19 Print Edition included the headline: "No, Canada: Justin Trudeau's crackdown on protests could make things worse. By seeking to curb free speech, he will aggravate Canada's divisions." The article concludes: "Canada is not yet a rancorous or bitterly divided society. If Mr. Trudeau wants to keep it that way, he should stop trying to police Canadians' thoughts." Articles pasted below.
3. **US Political Reactions to Canadian Measures:** U.S. reactions across the political spectrum point to Canada being pulled in to the deep U.S. polarization. Our U.S. network is receiving calls and letters. The recurring theme to these calls is concern over the *Emergencies Act* being invoked. Some described the situation as horrifying and a violation of human rights against Canadian citizens, while others indicated that they would no longer visit Canada or would look elsewhere for their business needs as they fear that business transactions might be frozen with no warning under the Emergency Act. A tweet from Tesla's CEO Elon Musk comparing PM Trudeau to Adolf Hitler (deleted since) is also fueling discussion on social media with many criticizing Musk for this extreme comparison, including the Auswitch Museum.

Some of the elected officials' reactions of the last 24 hours include (roll-up attached):

- “Justin Trudeau is acting like a tyrant. He has done everything to silence peaceful protesters and nothing to resolve the underlying matter: mandates do not work.” -- **Senator Marsha Blackburn, R-TN**
 - “Trudeau’s authoritarianism is a harbinger of where the woke Left wants to take America - they detest free speech and free exchange of ideas and anyone who dares disagree. They are the enemies of the open society. And they are already running the Biden White House.” -- **Senator Josh Hawley, R-MO**
 - “The media is harassing Americans who gave \$20 to the Canadian truck convoy. They should be asking BLM donors if they support paying bail for the Louisville BLM leader charged with attempted assassination of a Jewish politician.” -- **Senator Tom Cotton, R-AR**
- 4. 64 House Republicans send a letter to President Biden (Letter attached):**
Representative Matt Rosendale (R-MT) sent a letter co-signed by 63 other House Republicans in support of the truckers protesting COVID-19 vaccine mandates, and urging President Biden to work with Canada to lift the mandates on essential travel at the border. The letter states that the Canadian Trucking Alliance expects as many as 22,000 Canadian and 16,000 American drivers to forgo cross-border trips, retire, or quit in response to the new entry requirements. This type of disruption will only further damage our already crumbling supply chains. It also notes that “truckers are the lifeblood of our nation, and I am proud to see truck drivers throughout the U.S. and Canada boldly take a stand to put an end to tyrannical COVID-19 vaccine mandates, including at our northern border”. List of signatories attached.
- 5. Threats in DALAS:** On the evening of February 16 (afterhours), DALAS received two threatening messages from American citizens. The first voicemail was very explicit; punctuated with vulgar terms to describe the Prime Minister. The caller concluded by stating “this message is from Texas”. The second caller identified himself as a “descendent of the Third Reich”, and the message was much more lengthy, with sharp views on how Canada is an authoritarian government. DALAS escalated the issue to diplomatic police and RCMP colleagues in WSHDC, who are now investigating the matter. In an abundance of caution, staff have been asked to work from home Thursday and again Friday. DALAS has not received any additional threatening voice messages since Wednesday evening.

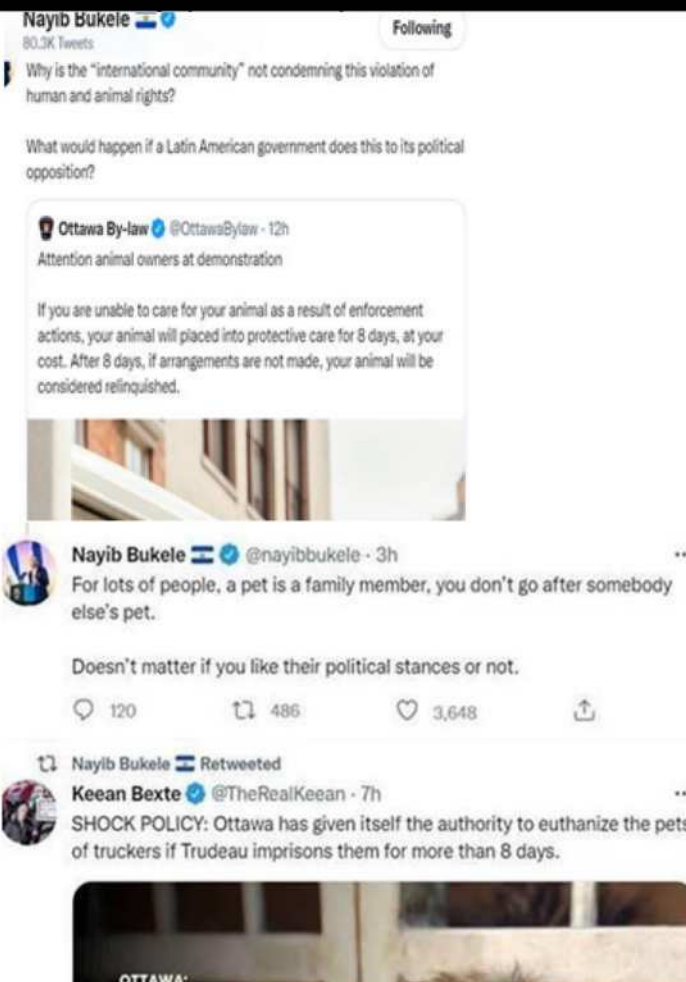
International copycat actions and reactions

- 6. Texas (Feb. 18):** Texas Rep. Chip Roy has continued to weigh in on the convoy by reposting critical tweets about Prime Minister Trudeau’s handling of the situation. Roy reposted the following content on his account in recent days.



7. **El Salvador (Feb. 17):** For the fourth consecutive day, President Bukele tweeted about Canadian events. This time, he retweeted the Ottawa City by-law account's instructions about animal care during law enforcement actions. s.38

s.38



8. **Wellington, NZ (Feb. 19):** The protest at Parliament grounds is in its 11th day. A statement from 28 community leaders in the greater Wellington region has asked that the protest end immediately. Protesters are showing a greater degree of organisation, with makeshift kitchens, volunteer-staffed foodbanks, and the planting of a herb garden. Police are still refusing to take enforcement action because of fears it will lead to violence. While the towing of illegally parked vehicles remains “in the toolkit of options”, the Police says such enforcement action at the current time risks escalating the situation. Protest numbers are expected to grow this weekend, with calls on social media for more people to join the occupation. There are approximately 800 people currently on Parliament’s grounds.



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U.S. Media coverage (abbreviated, full article attached)

Police Begin Arresting Protest Organizers in Canada

New York Times, Sarah Maslin Nir, Natalie Kitroeff, Dan Bilefsky and Ian Austen, 18 February 2022
The police have begun moving in to make some arrests in downtown Ottawa, hoping to end weeks of gridlock in Canada’s capital from demonstrations sparked by vaccination requirements and other grievances.

Canadian Police Begin Freedom Convoy Arrests

Wall Street Journal, Kim Mackrael and Paul Vieira, 18 February 2022
Police began arrests of people protesting against Covid-19 mandates on Thursday evening, including two organizers, after promising imminent action to remove a weeklong encampment from the streets of Canada’s capital city.

American truckers plan convoy to DC in protest of COVID-19 mandates

Fox News, Louis Casiano, 17 February 2022
Taking a cue from truckers bordering America’s north, a political action committee will partner with truck convoys to protest what it deems as overreaching government COVID-19 restrictions and mandates.

Canada's trucker blockade demands American attention

Seattle Times, Jon Talton, 18 February 2022

I didn't see this coming. This being the trucker blockade and unrest in Canada, our seemingly placid and liberal neighbor to the north.

MyPillow's CEO is coming to save Canada's truckers. With pillows, of course.

Politico Pro, Andy Blatchford, February 17 2022

MyPillow CEO Mike Lindell is determined to deliver more than 12,000 pillows to protesters who are entrenched in the semi-trucks that have overtaken downtown Ottawa. "He's just a horrible, evil dictator," Lindell said of Trudeau in an interview Thursday with POLITICO. "These truckers do this, and Trudeau reacts the way he is. The guy is a monster. He's a monster, fact. A monster beyond anything in history."

Opinion piece: The Giddy, Terrifying Siege of Ottawa

New York Times, Michelle Goldberg, February 17 2022

The tactic of using large vehicles to occupy a big city has inspired similar protests in countries including France, Israel and New Zealand. Trump supporters are planning American versions of the convoys next month. If they succeed in entrenching themselves somewhere, it could be terrifying, not least because unlike the Canadians, they'll probably be heavily armed. Their willingness to not just go to Ottawa, but in many cases to stay there in the freezing cold for weeks on end, is a sign of how profoundly the pandemic has eroded trust in the authorities. Two years of Covid has created a climate of suspicion, confusion and grief that the far right has been able to exploit.

Handshakes and hugs have some Canadians questioning law enforcement's soft touch with the protests.

New York Times, Vjosa Isai, 17 February 2022

Police in Ottawa are poised for a crackdown on the protests that have immobilized Canada's capital, but after three weeks of scant enforcement, images of police officers fraternizing with protesters have some Canadians questioning the gentle treatment of the demonstrations.

Trudeau Says Emergency Powers Necessary to Counter Freedom Convoy Protests in Canada

Wall Street Journal, Kim Mackrael and Paul Vieira, 17 February 2022

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau defended the government's decision to invoke extraordinary emergency powers to break up protests against Covid-19 mandates, saying the powers represent a proportional response to blockades that have stymied the capital and disrupted cross-border trade.

How American right-wing funding for Canadian trucker protests could sway U.S. politics

Associated Press, Richard Lardner, 17 February 2022

The Canadians who have disrupted travel and trade with the U.S. and occupied downtown Ottawa for nearly three weeks have been cheered and funded by American right-wing activists and conservative politicians who also oppose vaccine mandates and the country's liberal leader.

Canadian police vow to 'take back' Ottawa downtown in standoff with 'Freedom Convoy' protesters

Washington Post, Ellen Francis, 17 February 2022

Police in Canada's capital pledged to clamp down "in the coming days" on protesters from the self-styled "Freedom Convoy," who have dug in despite warnings of arrests.

Ottawa police warn occupiers: 'Leave now.' The protesters dig in.

Politico, Andy Blatchford, 16 February 2022

Two days after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau invoked never-used-before emergency powers, police in Canada's capital are warning convoy protesters to leave the city at once or face arrest.

Ontario provincial police mobilize in possible preparation to disperse protesters.

New York Times, Ian Austen and Richard Pérez-Peña, 17 February 2022

Ontario provincial police have mobilized outside Ottawa's city center Thursday, in what appears to be preparation for a promised clampdown on protesters who have paralyzed the city for more than two weeks.

What Is the Freedom Convoy? Trucker Protests in Canada Explained

Wall Street Journal, Paul Vieira, 17 February 2022

Since late January, downtown Ottawa has served as a parking lot for hundreds of heavy-duty trucks, pickup trucks and other vehicles, operated by individuals who say they are fed up with the social restrictions and vaccine mandates meant to contain the spread of Covid-19.

Elon Musk Ratchets Up Trudeau Criticism With Hitler Comparison Meme

Bloomberg, Craig Trudell, 17 February 2022

Elon Musk waded further into the political controversy over vaccine mandates that's gripped Canada for weeks, tweeting a meme making a satirical comparison between Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Adolf Hitler.

Fences Erected Outside Canada Parliament as Police Crack Down on Protesters

Newsweek, Erin Brady, 17 February 2022

The Canadian Parliament and Freedom Convoy protesters are both preparing for the worst as crackdowns against demonstrators get underway.

International coverage (abbreviated)

No, Canada: Justin Trudeau's crackdown on protests could make things worse

The Economist, February 19 2022 (Print edition)

The truckers are wrong about the vaccine mandate at the border. Such rules are a reasonable precaution to slow the spread of a deadly and highly infectious disease. Canada's government is right to enforce them. But the truckers have every right to express their disagreement. A wise government would listen to them and respond politely, taking their complaints seriously and patiently explaining why covid restrictions, though onerous, are necessary for the time being. Justin Trudeau has done the opposite.

No truck with Trudeau: Trudeau invokes emergency powers to shut down Canada's protests

The Economist, Feb 19th 2022 (Print edition)

Now in its third week, the "freedom convoy", which began as a protest against vaccine mandates for lorry-drivers entering from the United States, seems to be mellowing. But the government is toughening its response. On February 14th Mr Trudeau invoked the Emergencies Act for the first time in the law's 34-year history. Whatever the future holds for the freedom convoy, it has already shaken Canada and rallied populists of the right in other countries. Donald Trump and Fox News anchors have exalted the protesters. Organisers have raised millions of dollars, a large proportion of it from American donors. Copy-cat convoys have been staged in France and Australia.

NZ: MPs, mayors, councillors and school principals issue joint statement pleading for 'illegal protest activities' at Parliament to end

NewsHub, Zane Small, February 18 2022

A group of MPs, mayors, councillors and school principals in the Wellington region have issued a joint statement pleading for "illegal protest activities" around Parliament to end. The joint statement on behalf of Deputy Prime Minister Grant Robertson, who is MP for Wellington Central, says the people of Wellington "have had enough of this illegal activity, harassment and disruption".

Enforcement action against Parliament protesters could lead to violence - Coster

RNZ, 18 February 2022

In a press conference on Friday afternoon, Police Commissioner Andrew Coster said that the "only safe option" at the present time is a "continued focus on de-escalation and negotiation". Any enforcement action taken by police runs the "real risk of injury to the public, escalation in numbers of people, and a transition away from a largely peaceful protest to violence." Despite a lack of action,

Coster insisted that police had had "constructive engagement with some key protest leaders" following the release of yesterday's statement from the Speaker. A traffic management plan to control vehicle numbers will be put in place over the weekend to ensure that emergency vehicles can access the protest site.

Police seemingly cede control to protesters who are now controlling access to Parliament grounds, adding vehicles

Stuff.no.nz, Henry Cooke, Feb 18 2022

Protesters occupying Parliament's forecourt and surrounding streets have stepped up their level of control of the area. Security guards posted by the protesters on all the entrances to the Parliament forecourt now control access to and from the front of Parliament grounds, asking journalists and the police themselves to steer clear. Cars have been added in the last 24 hours to the streets adjacent to Parliament grounds. Protest leaders are yet to publicly respond to a statement issued by Speaker Trevor Mallard, which outlined that there would be no dialogue with protesters until they cleared the streets and took down their tents.

Canada protests: Police arrest leaders of trucker convoy

BBC News, February 18 2022

Police in Ottawa have detained two leaders of the trucker convoy in the Canadian capital as they move to break up the last stronghold of the protests against the nation's Covid rules. Tamara Lich was arrested on Thursday evening after Chris Barber was held, with both expected to be charged criminally, according to CBC News.

**No, Canada: Justin Trudeau's crackdown on protests could make things worse
The Economist, Feb 19th 2022**

By seeking to curb free speech, he will aggravate Canada's divisions
Canada's reputation for impeccable politeness is taking a knocking. In recent weeks crowds of lorry-drivers and other Canadians protesting against covid-19 restrictions have blocked public highways and camped outside parliament in Ottawa. Many wave placards reading "Fuck Trudeau", referring to their youthful prime minister, though the expletive often appears with a maple leaf as an asterisk. Nastier messages have cropped up, too. One or two protesters carried flags emblazoned with swastikas, perhaps to suggest, absurdly, that Canada's covid restrictions are akin to Nazism.

The freedom convoy, as the hundreds of lorry-drivers call themselves, was sparked by the introduction of a covid vaccine mandate in January. This requires all truckers who enter Canada from the United States, as thousands of Canadian drivers do every day, either to be jabbed or to endure a two-week quarantine. Although most Canadians think such rules are reasonable, the protesters have struck a chord with some. A vocal minority are fed up with burdensome pandemic restrictions. Many of the young, who have suffered job losses because of lockdowns designed to protect their elders, are especially grumpy. The truckers have received both verbal and monetary support from abroad. Donald Trump, Fox News and a cacophony of populists praise them. Well-wishers have crowdfunded their cause.

Faced with this ruckus, Canada's government should have drawn a clear distinction between harmful acts and obnoxious or foolish words. Peaceful protests are fine; blocking crucial highways so that others cannot go about their business is not. Some of the truckers shut down a bridge over which 25% of Canada's goods trade with the United States passes. The police took six days to

remove them. Given that the protest blocked an estimated \$350m of trade each day, this was needlessly slow.

The truckers are wrong about the vaccine mandate at the border. Such rules are a reasonable precaution to slow the spread of a deadly and highly infectious disease. Canada's government is right to enforce them. But the truckers have every right to express their disagreement. A wise government would listen to them and respond politely, taking their complaints seriously and patiently explaining why covid restrictions, though onerous, are necessary for the time being.

Justin Trudeau has done the opposite. First, he refused to meet them. Then, seizing on the fact that a few of the protesters appear to be bigots, he attempted to put all of them outside the boundaries of reasonable debate by condemning "the anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, anti-black racism, homophobia and trans phobia that we've seen on display in Ottawa over the past number of days". The police already have ample powers to quell disorder. Yet on February 14th Mr Trudeau invoked emergency powers under a 34-year-old law that had never been used before. It would allow the government to declare protests illegal and freeze the bank accounts of protesters without a court order.

Meanwhile, his Liberal government is mulling two worrying changes to Canada's already illiberal hate-speech laws. One would allow Canada's Human Rights Tribunal to impose large fines on those it deems to have used hateful language. It has in the past taken an expansive view of what counts as hateful, and defendants would enjoy fewer safeguards than they do under criminal law. The other proposed change would let individuals file legal complaints against people pre-emptively, if they fear that they may be about to say something hateful. These are both terrible ideas. The Economist has long argued that free speech should be restricted only under exceptional circumstances, such as when the speaker intends to incite physical violence. Canada's laws are already more restrictive than this, and the country's illiberal left would like them to be still more so. Academics have been suspended or disciplined for writing that Canada is "not racist" or for holding gender-critical views. The proposed amendments would give illiberal activists legal tools to harass conservative religious folk, traditional feminists and many more besides, simply for holding views that the left finds offensive. Worse, it would allow some to be gagged before they speak. Canada is not yet a rancorous or bitterly divided society. If Mr Trudeau wants to keep it that way, he should stop trying to police Canadians' thoughts.

https://www.economist.com/leaders/justin-trudeaus-crackdown-on-protests-could-make-things-worse/21807707?itm_source=parsely-api

No truck with Trudeau: Trudeau invokes emergency powers to shut down Canada's protests
The Economist, Feb 19th 2022

Will the populist protest outlast the pandemic?

Canada's maple-leaf flag is ubiquitous—draped over shoulders and unfurled from hockey sticks. The protesters who have converged on Ottawa, Canada's capital, to demand the end of covid-19 restrictions are brandishing it like stars-and-stripes-waving Americans. On weekdays their numbers dwindle to a thousand or so, though the clog of vehicles, from camper vans to 18-wheelers, parked outside parliament makes the crowd seem bigger. On weekends they are joined by many more, often groups of neighbours who form small convoys and bring

their children. That's when bouncy castles go up and dance parties appear. At the slightest excuse people burst into "O Canada".

Some spout conspiracy theories and wave "Fuck Trudeau" signs, showing their contempt for the Liberal prime minister, Justin Trudeau. Early in the protests some demonstrators waved swastika images. At least one Confederate flag was seen. Other protesters, using tropes beloved by anti-vaxxers worldwide, have absurdly likened Mr Trudeau to a Nazi, and some prominent participants have links to far-right groups.

But there is more talk of love, freedom and unity. Éric Fontaine, a boat painter, has been coming every weekend with friends from a small town south of Montreal. "We are against discrimination—every kind of discrimination, including against people who don't want to get vaccinated," he says. William Ameni, a Congolese-Canadian, hands out food and Bibles with other members of his church. He was surprised to learn that some of the protesters were anti-immigrant. "As a minority personally I do not feel any hostility," he says.

Now in its third week, the "freedom convoy", which began as a protest against vaccine mandates for lorry-drivers entering from the United States, seems to be mellowing. But the government is toughening its response. On February 14th Mr Trudeau invoked the Emergencies Act for the first time in the law's 34-year history. It gives the federal government powers to override other laws, seize authority from provincial and local governments and freeze the bank accounts of protesters without a court order. The day before, after Ontario's premier, Doug Ford, had declared a state of emergency, police cleared a blockade of the bridge linking Windsor, Ontario with Detroit, the conduit for a quarter of the goods trade between Canada and the United States.

After news broke of Mr Trudeau's plan to crack down, the truckers seemed unfazed. "We will hold the line," said Tamara Lich, a fundraiser and convoy spokeswoman, on the afternoon of February 14th. The next day Ottawa's chief of police resigned.

Whatever the future holds for the freedom convoy, it has already shaken Canada and rallied populists of the right in other countries. Donald Trump and Fox News anchors have exalted the protesters. Organisers have raised millions of dollars, a large proportion of it from American donors. Copy-cat convoys have been staged in France and Australia.

The city is theirs, for now

Canada once seemed immune to the raucous populism that in 2016 gave the world Mr Trump and Brexit. Now it seems to have become a superspreader. More than half of Canadians regard the convoy as a "fundamental attack" on democracy, according to Ipsos, a pollster.

Although Canada's strict public-health policies triggered the protest, its origins lie in older grievances. They are most potent in Canada's western provinces, which have long felt alienated from the more populous and liberal centre.

France's gilets jaunes (yellow-vest) protests in 2018 against high energy prices inspired a western Canadian movement in favour of oil pipelines and hostile to immigration. That gave rise to "united we roll", a lorry-led protest in 2019 against Mr Trudeau's environmental policies, which hurt Alberta's energy-based economy. The freedom convoy started out as its pandemic-themed successor. Ms Lich, who is described in the Canadian press as "the spark that lit the fire",

was an activist for a party that advocates western Canadian secession as a last resort.

Tom Quiggin, who says he provides “protective intelligence” for the convoy, is the author of an anti-globalist novel called “The New Order of Fear”. According to a tweet he posted, it depicts Mr Trudeau as “dead in his bed, strangled with a pair of halal socks”. Canada Unity, the closest the convoy has to a presiding organisation, initially called for the replacement of the government by a committee that would revoke the vaccine mandate. It has since withdrawn the demand.

Stephanie Carvin at Carleton University in Ottawa believes the convoy is “an extremist movement at its heart”. Nearly 60% of Canadians think it consists mainly of “anti-vaxxers and bigots intent on causing mayhem”, according to Ipsos.

Hold on, they are not going home

But, like the Omicron variant, it may be mutating into a milder and perhaps more spreadable form. Canada Unity now “condemns all hate symbols” and calls on Canadians to “forget about their differences”. That may widen the protest’s appeal among the majority who now want covid restrictions to end. Despite their scepticism of the freedom convoy, 46% of Canadians think the protesters’ “frustration is legitimate and worthy of our sympathy”. That rises to 61% among 18- to 34-year-olds, and to 59% among those who vote for the Conservatives, the main opposition party.

That raises the fear that the convoy could act as a Trojan horse for the sort of Trumpian populism that polarises politics across the border. Richard Johnston, a political scientist, argues that, as in the United States, Canada’s divides have been widening since the 1980s. People who identify with the Conservatives look a lot like Republicans; supporters of Mr Trudeau’s Liberals resemble American Democrats. In opinion surveys, “it’s very hard to see the border,” says Mr Johnston.

When Mr Trudeau was first elected in 2015 he wanted to forestall a backlash against globalisation and immigration, then already occurring in other countries, by boosting the middle class “and those working hard to join it”. He had some success, especially in his first term. His government introduced a means-tested child benefit that reduced poverty and cut tax rates on the bottom of the income scale while raising them for the rich. Under Mr Trudeau Canada managed the pandemic better than many countries (thanks partly to provincial premiers, who make most of the public-health rules in their territories). Confirmed deaths from covid-19 are about a third of those in the United States, in proportion to population.

Yet many Canadians do not see Mr Trudeau as a healer (see chart). In 2018 his government set a national floor for the price of carbon and banned oil tankers from loading on part of the west coast, especially enraging oil-dependent Albertans. It has raised immigration targets from around 270,000 in 2015 to 411,000 this year, more than 1% of the population (in part to make up for a pandemic drop).

In his second term Mr Trudeau became more interested in identity than income, making protection of indigenous and gay people and other minorities his

signature theme. He seems to agree with leftists who think that causing offence is a greater crime than suppressing speech.

The censoriously illiberal left has made inroads into several Canadian institutions. Rima Azar, a tenured professor of psychology at Mount Allison University, was suspended last year for seven months after writing a blog post in which she argued that Canada was "not racist" and that Black Lives Matter was a "radical" organisation.

Mr Trudeau's government has expressed shock that racist symbols were displayed during the protest. It appears to be planning to reintroduce an "anti-hate" bill that could lead to the imprisonment of people who use racist speech. This could include a clause which would allow individuals to take other people to court if they fear that they may be about to say something which falls under the definition of "hate propaganda". They could also be charged for contemplating an offence "motivated by bias, prejudice or hate based on race, national or ethnic origin, language, colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or any other similar factor". Lovers of free speech are aghast at the potential scope of this law.

The pandemic has brought the sort of populist insurgency Mr Trudeau had hoped to forestall. Whether it moves beyond causing chaos to threatening institutions depends in part on how Canada's politicians react. For the Conservative Party the freedom convoy is both a threat and a temptation. The protesters "deserve respect", declared Candice Bergen, the party's interim leader, who has sported a "Make America Great Again" cap. Pierre Poilievre, the only declared candidate so far in the forthcoming party-leadership election, has said that the convoy represents "all those that our government and our media have insulted and left behind", a line that Mr Trump could have uttered.

The Conservatives are glancing nervously over their right shoulders at Maxime Bernier, a former Conservative minister who has been handing out "freedom pancakes" to the protesters. His People's Party of Canada, formed in 2018, advocates lower immigration and denies that climate change is dangerous. Although it won no seats in last year's election it took nearly 5% of the vote, and tripled its vote share.

But Canada's immunity to Trumpism and its mutations has not collapsed. Protectionism and immigrant-bashing, Mr Trump's most distinctive causes, cannot win elections in Canada. Trade is the equivalent of 60% of Canada's gdp compared with 23% in the United States. Elections are won and lost in greater Toronto and Vancouver's suburbs, which have racially diverse populations. The Conservatives' post-mortem on their loss last year in part blamed the party's earlier resort to tactics like barring new Canadians from wearing niqabs when taking the citizenship oath, which offended Muslims. "That doesn't mean there isn't a backlash" against immigrants, says Mr Johnston. "It's lurking in the Conservative grassroots."

Those grassroots are more influential than they used to be, but have not yet seized control. Unlike in the United States, regional parties are not subsidiaries of national ones. Mr Ford is aligned with the national Conservatives but he belongs to the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario. The federal Conservatives cannot control regional legislatures as America's politicians do. Independent commissions draw the boundaries of electoral districts, avoiding the

gerrymandering that contributes to polarisation in the United States. The share of fundamentalist Christians in the electorate is much smaller, which gives politicians less scope to mobilise voters passionately opposed to social change. Few Canadians wish their politics were more like those of their southern neighbour. Two-thirds say their system of government is better, according to the Confederation of Tomorrow, an annual survey. Just 5% say the United States has a better system. In 1991 preferences were almost evenly divided. The culprit for this immense shift in assessments of the two systems, the survey says, is America's increasingly polarised politics, culminating in Mr Trump's presidency. Mr Trump's endorsement of the convoy may therefore encourage Canadians to reject the sort of politics it represents. The anti-vaxx uprising is "a spasm", Mr Johnston thinks. "It's unsettling, it's embarrassing, but it's not existential."

<https://www.economist.com/the-americas/justin-trudeau-invokes-emergency-powers-to-shut-down-canadas-freedom-convoy/21807705>
